



City of Hampton, VA

Meeting Minutes

City Council

22 Lincoln Street
Hampton, VA 23669
www.hampton.gov

W. H. "Billy" Hobbs, Jr.
Will Moffett
Chris Snead

Christopher G. Stuart
Donnie R. Tuck
George E. Wallace

Molly Joseph Ward, Mayor

Staff:

Mary Bunting, City Manager
Cynthia Hudson, City Attorney
Katherine K. Glass, CMC, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, July 11, 2012

6:02 PM

Council Chambers, 8th Floor, City Hall

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

MOLLY JOSEPH WARD PRESIDED

PRESENT: Will Moffett, Chris Snead, Donnie R. Tuck, George E. Wallace

ABSENT: W. H. "Billy" Hobbs, Jr. and Christopher G. Stuart

Councilmen Hobbs and Stuart were not present at the time of roll call; however, arrived shortly thereafter.

Mayor Ward welcomed everyone to the Public Comment Period. She asked for everyone's assistance in proceeding as efficiently as possible since numerous people have signed up to speak.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Jane Hobbs, 1510 Morgan Dr., greeted the Mayor and members of Council and made the following statement: I appreciate the opportunity to come before you. I want you to know that I am on the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities. I work with a lot of wonderful people with special needs. I brought them with me tonight from Our Choices. They would like to have the opportunity to speak with you and have a chance to meet you. They have always wanted to meet the Mayor.

Mayor Ward welcomed those present from Our Choices Advocacy Council. Ms. Hobbs assisted the next two speakers who spoke on behalf of Our Choices Advocacy Council.

Mr. Kedric Gurley, 260 Chapel Street, greeted the Mayor and made the following statement: Our Choices is a program for people with disabilities. We are a group of self-advocates and facilitators who meet monthly to discuss and advocate issues that individuals with intellectual disabilities face on a daily basis. Mr. Gurley handed the members of Council cards which have the statement on them "words hit like a fist" and

"When you use words like retard or retarded, it hurts people". I hurt and it hurts me. Many people who have disabilities consider retard the most offensive word accorded to disabilities. Consider carefully choosing your words in the future please because words hit like a fist.

Mr. Brian Riddle, 11 Conway Road, made the following statement: I am from the Our Choice group and have a program I would like to tell you about. The "R" word is retarded. It hurts people when they are called the "R" word. Words hit like a fist. The "R" word should never be used and it is not good to be using the "R" word.

Ms. Hobbs commented that we wanted everyone in the City of Hampton and the entire Commonwealth of Virginia to know that the "R" word hurts very deeply. We would like to spread the word through you all to realize that we are part of society. We appreciate the opportunity to be able to come tonight and to meet each one of you. Thank you very much for your time.

Mayor Ward noted we appreciate the time and energy it took for those from Our Choices Advocacy Council to come tonight. Vice Mayor Wallace reiterated the message that the "R" word is not acceptable and it hits like a fist. He expressed the importance of this message being clearly communicated to the community.

Mr. Rudy Langford, P.O. Box 282, President of the Coalition for Justice for Civil Rights greeted Mayor Ward and the members of Council and made the following statement: I want to quickly discuss three matters. We are asking you to strike down the taxi rate increase. We are opposed to that and we are asking you not to pass that. We are asking you all to strike down and not pass the Tethering (Ordinance). I think all of this is senseless. You cannot implement it. It is a financial burden on the citizens and a financial burden on the City. It is expensive and needs not to be there. The best that we ask is for you to defer it for the study, but not pass it tonight. On behalf of the Coalition for Justice, we accepted to work with Bryant Weiford's family – the young man who was shot and killed July 1st on Pembroke Avenue. We had a meeting Monday; 98 people attended. There are only five here this evening. We all understand that this City Council is no way at fault. We are coming here this evening to let you know that this family is struggling. They are trying to endure the loss of a dear family member. I want you to know that there will be recommendations coming to our Manager referencing the Police Department and the way things have been happening over the last four years with the numerous complaints, the lack of (in our opinion) training and police equipment. We will be moving forward working with the City Manager on those two items. I thank you for your time.

Mr. John Ezzell, 428 Seaboard Avenue, greeted the members of Council, thanked them for allowing him to speak and made the following statement: I am here on behalf of my brother Bryant Weiford who was 26 when he was shot and killed by the Hampton Police Department. My mother passed away when he was two years old and my sister was three months old. Along with my grandmother, I helped raised him for another six years until she passed away. I went to school, came home and cared for him and my sister. When I stopped going to school and worked, the same thing continued. I feel like I had more than just a sibling bond with him; I helped raise him. Even as an adult, he came to me for guidance. They had nobody else; our parents are dead; it was just us three. I work six days a week. Tuesday nights were mine and my brother's night. We would rent movies and sit and talk. Those are memories I won't have anymore because they

have been taken from me. He didn't deserve to lose his life. If people look into the case, there were other choices the Police Department could have made, but the papers are stating they only had one choice. If you look back over the last several years, there has been an on-going thing with cases like this. Something needs to be done about it. They (the police) don't have free will to kill anybody they want. This isn't the wild, wild west. I am here to speak for my brother today. I want justice for him. I want the Commonwealth's Attorney to grant an independent study. I have fond memories of him, but they are all tarnished now. Today will be a memory in my life, not of coming here speaking to you all; but, of picking up my brother's ashes three hours ago in a plastic box. Thank you.

Ms. Cassie Ezzell, 428 Seaboard Avenue, made the following statement: I am here tonight because I would like to share a few things about someone very special. Bryant was someone that to know him was to love him. I loved him very deeply. Having to say goodbye to Bryant for the last time Sunday was devastating for many people knowing now that there will always be an empty seat on Tuesday night movies, birthday parties and cookouts. I still seems unreal. I can remember sitting up many nights with him talking. He had hopes, dreams and plans for his future including things he wanted to accomplish in his life. That is not going to happen now. That was taken from him when they shot him. He was more than just a name in the newspaper. He was an uncle and a brother. A big hole was left when we lost him. I just wanted you all to know that.

Ms. Paula Howell, 150 Pine Creek Drive, greeted the members of Council and made the following statement: This is my first attendance at any Council meeting in Hampton. I have lived here for over 20 years. Although I have believed in you all along, the issue that brought me out tonight is the issue of tethering animals in the City of Hampton. I am here to voice my support for nothing less than complete banning of tethering of any kind of animals in the City of Hampton. The information I got about the Ordinance that has been presented recently is that it is complicated, would be hard to enforce, there is a permit fee to tether animals, but it did not address how the system would work or what the requirements would be. This seems so unnecessary to make it a complicated issue. Charging for a permit is not getting to the heart of the matter which is the health and welfare of the animal. The issue with tethering animals is not that the City is not getting any money for it; it is about the welfare of the animal. I was concerned about that and took a cross section of some cities across the country on line today about what their ordinances are. They are so simply stated. There should be no confusion about this issue. She read a portion of an ordinance from a city in Oklahoma which states "No person shall at anytime fasten, chain or tie any dog or cause such dog to be fastened, chained or tied while such dog is on the dog owner's property or on the property of the dog owner's landlord". She then read a portion of an ordinance from a city in New Orleans "Tethering: no animal shall be tethered as a primary means of stationary confinement. Stationary confinement by tethering shall be considered cruel treatment." She then read a portion of an ordinance from a city in Florida "Dogs or cats shall not be chained, tied, fastened or otherwise tethered to dog houses, trees, fences or other stationary objects as a means of confinement to property".

Ms. Howell continued her statement. Some of the city ordinances across the country have gone so far that they are beyond not tethering and into the actual conditions of the back yards for the animals which could be our next step. I beg you to please go for the complete ban. Take the confusion out of the issue. These cities were all given a short survey. Thank you.

Mayor Ward reminded those in the audience who may have never been to a meeting that we try to keep applause to a minimum particularly when a controversial issue is being discussed. She noted it is one thing to encourage disabled citizens; however, is something different when cheering takes place in Council Chambers. She asked everyone to remember we must have a level of civility and decorum in Chambers. She welcomed everyone's point of view and recommended speakers who have numerous supporters in the audience have them stand to show their support.

Mr. Ernest Ferguson, 7 Langley Avenue, greeted Mayor Ward and the members of Council and made the following statement: I live in Hampton and am here due to Yellow Cab. I ride with Yellow Cab every day. My problem with the issue is a Newport News Cab comes to Hampton to pick up Hampton riders, but Hampton cannot pick up Newport News riders. They can take someone to Newport News, but they cannot pick up anyone to bring them back here. I think this is something that should be looked into because these drivers have families. I ride every morning. It costs \$2.75 to get into the cab. From where I live to my job site runs about \$4.50. I think the cabs should have an increase. Thank you for listening.

Mayor Ward noted it was good to see Mr. Ferguson looking well and appearing to be on the mend.

Ms. Linda Seely, 118 Horsley Drive, greeted the Mayor, Vice Mayor, Councilmembers, City Manager and City Attorney and made the following statement: You all have already heard all of the things said about animals that are tethered. I don't need to repeat that. I am here tonight to plead for you all to pass a No-Tethering Ordinance. This is desperately needed in this City. These animals have suffered long enough. The last time, I offered for all of us to tie ourselves up; not one of you took me up on the offer. I don't know why, but you didn't. If we pass this Ordinance, Hampton is going to be the flagship throughout the entire State. This will tell us more about our City than anything else that you all can do. Helping something defenseless and voiceless, as God's creatures, is something we are responsible for taking care of them. They may not be the one that scratches your back and puts you in office, but their owners do. Their owners remember what you do for the defenseless and the voiceless. I am serious tonight. I don't care whether you like me or like what I am saying, I am speaking from my heart. I have been in this for forty years and out on the roads rescuing cats and dogs. You can take it seriously if you want to, or you don't (have to). I am telling you what these poor defenseless, voiceless animals do. A lady's dog was burned terribly from this hot weather. I plead from my heart for you to ban tethering, please. Thank you.

Mayor Ward reminded speakers that the yellow light indicates they have one additional minute of speaking time; however, the red light indicates their speaking time has expired.

Ms. Saskia Reneau, 12709 Mariners Court #2, Newport News, greeted the members of Council and made the following statement: I am a cab driver for the City of Newport News and Hampton. I work for Orange Cab. I am here today to talk about the cab fare increase for Hampton. As a single mom cab driver, it is a very expensive job to have. You have to come out of your pocket to pay your lease and for gas. Driving for Newport News and Hampton, the increase in Newport News paid for our gas. It gets more and more expensive every single day. I don't think it is asking too much to increase it a little bit with everything else in the world going up. We are the ones who are out there in the

rain, sleet and every storm. I don't think it is too much to ask. I have clients in both cities, Newport News and Hampton. My clients did not complain in Newport News when it (the rate) went up. I don't think Hampton clients would complain either. We give great service. We are there on time. I'm sure the people of Hampton would understand the five cent increase because they see everything else go up. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Sheree Hardy, 533 Chanticlar Court, made the following statement: I am a driver for Orange Cab of Newport News. I am here to talk about the taxicab rate increase. I have been doing this for quite some time now. I have regular clientele. Some of my clients have not noticed the increase because it is so minimal. I am a single parent. Everything else has gone up including rent, utilities and groceries; yet, we have to stay with the economics of the world today. I do not believe that the minimal increase is going to affect the citizens. We give great service. We are there on time. It is well deserved.

Ms. Stephine Craven, 501 B Washington Street, greeted the Mayor, Vice Mayor and members of Council and made the following statement: I am here on behalf of the shooting death of my brother Bryant Weiford that occurred July 1, 2012. I am still at a loss for words. I cannot believe that my brother is gone. The way that he was taken from me hurts. I have a six year old nephew at the house that looks at me every day and asks me why he (Bryant) cannot come home. I don't have answers for him. He (Bryant) was the rock between me and my other sister. We all stayed in a house together. We don't have parents. All of us siblings are together raising four boys. Now the only male figure in their lives is gone. The police want to say it was a 20 second decision for that officer to shoot my brother when he pulled up to the crime scene. I am here to fight for justice for my brother. I am truly trying to fight for justice for my brother. He was 26. It wasn't his time. I need to see justice for my brother. I would ask that you have the Commonwealth's Attorney do an independent study because I am not letting this go. This was not right. My brother deserves to be here with me today. Thank you.

Ms. Hannah Schein, 127 Hidalgo Drive, greeted Mayor Ward and the members of Council and made the following statement: I am speaking for myself as well as on my husband's behalf. We have lived at 127 Hidalgo in the Fox Bridge neighborhood for over 10 years and we absolutely adore our home and our City. We are here to support the Ordinance limiting the chaining of dogs. We don't have dogs of our own because we are very busy and we know that we are not home enough and don't have the time required to take proper responsible care of a dog. Chaining a dog for hours on end neglects these loyal, clever animals. It destroys their emotional well-being, robs them of the chance to socialize with other dogs, denies them the exercise they all need and compromises the safety of our community. At least one Hampton child has died after being attacked by a chained dog and we understand that others have been injured. The recent heat wave is one example of what chained dogs have to endure. With temperatures exceeding 90 and even 100 degrees recently, no doubt some dogs were left to suffer in the scorching sun with no relief or ability to cool themselves, often without any access to adequate shade or even water. If the chain gets tangled, as it often does, this is a death sentence in these extreme weather conditions for a dog that can't reach a water bowl or reach a patch of shade. We urge the Council to pass the Tethering Ordinance to reduce the suffering and to prevent any other humans or animals from being injured or killed. Thank you for your consideration and for making Hampton such a great place to live.

Mr. Edwin Boone, 48 Snow Street, read his poem entitled "Insight". A copy of the poem is attached to the minutes. Mr. Boone referenced the Daily Press article dated June 28th regarding former Councilman Ross Kearney retiring. He said currently, Mr. Kearney lives in Phoebus which is a ghost town and that is what type of representative we have here. Currently, Vice Mayor Wallace sits at the table of the Purchasing and Procurement Oversight Committee (PPOC). It is still 0-3% (minority and woman owned businesses). At the last meeting of the PPOC, they talked about spending millions of dollars this summer for projects. They will have to do research afterwards. I wonder how many minorities and woman will get any of that work. I am talking about your legacy. I am talking about Mayor Molly Ward who was just re-elected. She and her family benefited from the purchase of Harbor Square. She adamantly denies getting paid for it, but we paid her bill off. My question to the Council is this – Why was there such a hurry, less than 30 days to pay that note off? The reason is because the Housing Authority was going to call in the note and force the organization to prove to have a plan in place to fix up Harbor Square because it was a slum place. That is the reason for the rush; less than 30 days. My question to the new Councilmembers is what is going to be your legacy? This is your first day on City Council at the table. Please leave a better note than previously stated.

Mr. Frank Ottofaro, Jr., 341 Wrexham Court, greeted the members of Council and made the following statement: I am here on behalf of my father, Frank J. Ottofaro, Sr., who passed away on March 14th of this year and to continue his 12 year fight against the City of Hampton for their misuse of the eminent domain laws to take his property. I would like to congratulate Councilmembers Hobbs and Snead. It was a good fight. I would also like to add that sometimes the majority vote is not necessarily the right vote. Your legacy is going to be before you. Please think not only with your head, but also with your heart when you make some of these tough decisions that will come before you. Obviously, you cannot please everyone. You have a tough job. All of you have tough jobs. I know that. I would also like to thank City Attorney Hudson for taking care of one of the two items I requested at last month's meeting. She emailed me some figures of legal costs associated with the Power Plant condemnations as a whole. I would have liked to have it more specific, but thank you for addressing it. I do appreciate that. I would also like to formally request to put on the August or September 2012 Council agenda to rename Power Plant Parkway for the fourth time (it has been renamed) to Frank J. Ottofaro Memorial Parkway due to my father's 12 year battle with the City of Hampton up until his death. He deserves to be acknowledged as an example to fight for what you believe in regardless of what it may be - your civil rights, the right to own property, the right to tether animals or not to. I think he paid the ultimate price. Thank you for your time. Please make the right decisions here. I've asked, for several years, just like he did, that you do him right and fix what you did to the family. I stand up here until my time runs out and then I sit down. You have to listen. I made an offer, extended my hand of friendship for you to fix this. You owed the family \$240,000 more with 12 years of interest to make them fair and equal – not any more or any less than what everyone else in that project received. It's going to go higher now. I don't know exactly the amount of the legal costs, but I have estimated somewhere in the \$400,000 range. That is almost double what they owed the family. It doesn't make sense. Thank you.

Ms. Misty Collins, 239 Locust Avenue, made the following statement: I am here to speak against the tethering of animals here in the City of Hampton. No dog should be tethered, period. If you were to read the stipulation that you can obtain a permit in order to chain your dog - that basically says that we care about the dogs of Hampton. Unless

you give us money, they were going to ignore those. That is just not acceptable. Last week during the fireworks in Michigan, four dogs that were chained at four different addresses during the fireworks jumped the fence and hung themselves. That is four dead dogs in one night because they had no way to escape the terror of fireworks and most dogs are scared of fireworks. They probably got hung up on a fence and strangled and suffocated. We don't want that to happen in Hampton. I tried to get some statistics; however, Animal Control does not respond to deceased animals on private property, so we don't know if anything like that happened in Hampton this last week. I've had 25 years of experience with animals, both as an Animal Control Officer for a local city and currently, I am a field worker. I come across chained dogs every single day and the loneliness, frustration and the dirt circles they protect is sad. They are pack animals and the worse thing you can do is isolate them. Chaining them will make them crazy. It makes them mad. I have been attacked by a chained dog. I couldn't walk for days. I was debilitated. I wouldn't want that to happen to anybody else. Ms. Bunting, you could not imagine what one of your dachshunds would do if you tethered them because they would want to know what is going on. The bottom line is – don't tether them. This isn't to bust the chops of someone who is letting their dog out while they make breakfast and are getting ready to go to work before bringing them back inside. This is to alleviate suffering for animals that are out there all of the time. Thank you.

Ms. Amber Hogg, 218 E. Sewell Avenue, asked those in attendance in support of the Tethering Ordinance to stand to be recognized and made the following statement: My husband and I have a 14 month old son and two dogs. As I watch my son grow, he becomes more inquisitive. I do not want to have to explain to him why some dogs have to live outside and why mine don't. I don't want to have to explain to him why they are tied to a tree or a run-down dog house. I don't want to have to explain to him why these poor dogs are panting in 100 degree heat struggling at the end of their chain to reach a shady spot or (reach to get) a sip of water. I do not want to explain to him what happens to terrified dogs when a tornado or hurricane strikes. I want him and everyone else's child to grow in this City that has made the right decision for our dogs inclusive of a proper ordinance on tethering. With money budgeted and talk about tourism, this is great for Hampton, but we do not want potential tourists to see the massive amounts of chained dogs as they drive down King Street to Langley, to Pembroke, to Buckroe or LaSalle and Victoria and Downtown Hampton, do we? I wholeheartedly support the foundation of this ordinance because it is long overdue and certainly is far better than having no restrictions at all. I see no reason why our City should issue tethering permits to anyone. If Council votes to approve the existence of such an absurd thing as a tethering permit, I urge Council to ensure that our City denies tethering permits for dogs that have not been spayed or neutered as they are the most aggressive on chains. I also urge you to deny permits to any pit bulls. It is a fact that we have dog fighters in Hampton and they keep their dogs chained. I beg you, please do not enable dog fighters in our City to keep pit bulls chained and endanger our community just because they paid a \$25 permit fee. Please consider this – wouldn't it make more sense to have a blanket enforcement of no more than three hours per day? This would reduce Hampton Animal Control time on checking permits and dealing with paperwork. If revenue is an issue, surely enforcement actions can result in fines that would equal or surpass revenue generated by permits. Dogs are supposed to be our best friends, not security systems or lawn ornaments. Please be compassionate and do the right thing. Make sure this Ordinance is fair. It is your responsibility to make sure Hampton dogs have the same protections, if not more, as dogs in Virginia Beach and Norfolk. Hampton

needs to step up to the plate on the Peninsula and set an example. I have lived here my whole life and I hope you won't disappoint me. Thank you.

Mayor Ward clarified for the record that prior to making her comments, Ms. Hogg wanted those who were opposed to tethering to stand. She added clarification is needed because Ms. Hogg initially said "tethering" when she called for those in favor to stand. Ms. Hogg agreed with the Mayor that she intended to have those in the audience who were opposed to tethering to stand.

Ms. Emily Allen, 501 Front Street, greeted Mayor Ward and the members of Council and thanked them for the opportunity to speak and made the following statement: I represent People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and its members in Hampton. Many of them are wearing stickers today to show their support for a ban on dog tethering. Hampton is no stranger to the tragic consequences of chaining, both in terms of it causing dogs to become aggressive, attack and hurt or even kill children and as far as its terrible effects on the psychological and physical welfare of man's best friend. PETA supports the passage of an ordinance to ban and/or restrict continuous chaining. We thank you all for taking this issue seriously. As it is currently drafted, the Ordinance allows for tethering permits – something we are unaware of in the dozens of jurisdictions across the United States or even locally that have passed anti-tethering laws. We feel it is a needlessly, time consuming step which is sure to make enforcement more difficult as well as create additional work for Animal Control who is already stretched very thin. If permits are to be granted, no citizen should be permitted to tether dogs that have not been spayed and/or neutered nor pit bull type dogs. Studies have shown that unaltered animals are more likely to attack than animals that have been sterilized. Chaining causes dogs to be aggressive. When you put those two together, you have a potentially deadly combination. We also urge you not to allow pit bull type dogs to be tethered. Dog fighters are notorious for keeping pit bulls chained 24/7 in efforts to make them mean. We are aware of multiple addresses here in the City of Hampton where numerous dogs, especially pit bulls, are chained in one location. This is a cruel and dangerous situation which should not be allowed to continue simply because the owner paid a \$25 fee. We hope you will choose to revisit the permit issue. Please remember that dogs don't have a choice and depend on you. Just last month, one of our field workers aided numerous victims who were affected by the tornado that hit the area. Many of the dogs were chained outside when the tornado hit and were left to fend for themselves on a ten foot chain. In one particular case, we discovered a dog that had a trampoline fall on top of her outside and miraculously, the dog survived. This dog and so many others like her did not have a choice but to be chained outside. If she did have a choice, I'm certain she would join me in asking you (to be) in favor of a ban or significant restriction in tethering without any exceptions. Thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Hugh Bassette, 117 Rip Rap Road, made the following statement: Those of us who are living in older neighborhoods are having a problem. Old Northampton has been around since 1850, Aberdeen has been around since the 1930's, Garden City off of Shell Road and Lee's Corner has been around since after slavery.

Mr. Bassette referenced a letter he received which documents a citizen's situation. The citizen applied for a loan for \$3,000 to repair a roof leak. The Hampton Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) observed his property and stated in order for him to receive a \$3,000 loan, he would be required to bring his house up to code which would

cost approximately \$96,000 in repairs. A lot of houses in the older black neighborhoods are old. Mr. Bassette stated his own house was built in 1941 and there are probably things on his house that need repair. He said he believes you should excuse some of these houses. Mr. Bassette continued describing the citizen's situation. His house is over 100 years old built in 1912. The assessed value is \$51,000 which means the City wants him to pay over \$90,000 to fix a \$51,000 house in order to get a \$3,000 loan which does not make sense. Mr. Bassette then listed some of the requirements that would have to be met in order to bring the house to code as installing a range hood, installing a bath exhaust vent fan, removing a furnace and installing air conditioning. Mr. Bassette asked if it makes sense for a man in his 80's who has lived in the house all of his life to be required to make \$96,000 worth of repairs in order to obtain a \$3,000 loan to fix his roof. Mr. Bassette said the HRHA provisions need to be changed to suit some of these older neighborhoods. He said the Old Northampton community is requesting the City Manager to look at requirements for home loans. He noted he would return for the August meeting because this topic is scheduled to be on the August agenda. He added people in his neighborhood can only borrow \$25,000 while people in other neighborhoods can borrow \$50,000.

Ms. Carolyn Jackson, 354 Otley Road, greeted the Mayor and members of Council, thanked them for having her and made the following statement: I have been a Hampton cab driver for the last five years. I am here tonight to ask for a raise in the cab fare of five cents. We are all independent drivers who are self employed. We use our cab company as our livelihood. We would like for the five cent increase to coincide with the Newport News cab company for the simple reason of when we are picking up passengers here and taking them to Newport News, there is a difference in the cab fare and our customers recognize it. They are not complaining because it is only five cents and our average ride in Hampton is approximately \$5-\$7. This will average about an increase of 65 cents. I think it would be a good thing for us since we are all independent and this is the only way we do our livelihood. It would also put Hampton in line with Newport News. The increase would be a great help to us because we have to pay for our own gas and our own yearly taxi license which comes from whatever we make in our livelihood. Also, when you ride with a Yellow Cab driver, you are riding very safe because we have to have background checks and spot drug testing. The customer is getting a good deal by riding with Yellow Cab because we value our customers and take very good care of them. Thank you.

Ms. Brandy Arone, 35 Twin Oaks Drive, greeted the members of Council, thanked them for having her and made the following statement: I am here to reiterate how important a five cent increase will be to the drivers of Hampton taxicabs. I have personally witnessed the gas prices go up a dime overnight. We are asking for a nickel, but we really need a quarter. That nickel is just a drop in the bucket; however, it will be appreciated. I understand the issue of the elderly and the disabled; however, they use cabs on average one week out of each month and receive a cost of living increase every time the cost of living goes up, and we do not. We have not had an increase in several years. We still brave the heat all day, everyday to take care of everybody – young and old. We have taken it upon ourselves to purchase and modify vehicles to cater to the elderly and disabled. A five cent increase would simply be their way of saying thank you. The only other reasonable objection I have heard to the increase is that the Newport News drivers will no longer want to work in Hampton at the old rate. In my opinion, if Newport News has an issue with Hampton's rate, they should stay in Newport News and collect Newport News rates. We have it just as hard in Hampton as they do in

Newport News. This five cent increase would be a help to the men and women who keep our streets safe every weekend and every day with the service we provide. Please consider that everyone else received an increase, why not us? Thank you.

Councilman Tuck noted that out of all the people who have spoken on this topic, Ms. Arone is the only one who mentioned modifying a vehicle at her own expense. He then inquired about what modifications she has made. Ms. Arone apologized for any confusion and clarified modifications were not made at her own expense; instead, at the expense of the taxicab company as they have a special fleet of cabs which cater just to the needs of the elderly and disabled.

Ms. Shelley Peterson, 219 Chautaugua Avenue, Portsmouth, Va., greeted the Mayor and members of Council and made the following statement: I am a native of Portsmouth, but am here tonight to speak out against the unjust shooting of my friend, Bryant Weiford. He was one of my dearest friends which I have known for over 10 years. In the time that I knew him, he was one of the most kind, humble, all around good people that I had ever met. He was the type of man that greeted every person he met with a smile and was pleasant and courteous to all. I am not here to talk about the man he was, but to speak out about the way in which his life was taken in an incident which took place just a few blocks from here on July 1st. I ask the City Councilmembers to please seek a proper, just and unbiased investigation. In this country, everyone has the right to live. Other choices could have been made. Bryant's life did not have to be taken with such excessive force. Bryant was a good man. He was a rock for many, but most of all to his young nephews, his sisters and his brother. Please do not let his death go without the proper justice we all deserve as citizens of the United States. I thank you for your time this evening.

Mr. Jeff Bryan, 35 Alexander Drive, made the following statement: We have heard so many good reasons why you should ban tethering completely. You also came out and asked the citizens what their opinion was and the vast majority said (they would prefer) no tethering at all. I think this is Hampton's time to shine and set the standard that we are not going to worry about what Norfolk or Virginia Beach does and just ban it altogether. Mr. Bryan then commented – give the taxicab drivers their five cent.

Mr. Winder Bill, 203 85th Street, greeted Mayor Ward, Vice Mayor Wallace and the members of Council and made the following statement: I am here representing Yellow Cab of Hampton. Judy Swystun asked me to speak on her behalf at this Public Comment session. She will be here for the regular Council meeting. The modest meter increase request is below the increase in the general cost of living and significantly lower than the cost increase in gasoline since the last fare modification. The fare increase is reasonable and the new rates compare well with other southeastern Virginia municipalities. Not bringing the meter rate up to current market levels, runs a significant risk of lowering the quality of cab service to the Hampton riding public. Professional drivers who cannot make an adequate living in Hampton will choose other options. Please help ensure the maintaining of the current high standard of taxicab service in Hampton by passing this reasonable rate change.

Mr. Bill added comments from his point of view and position as a cab industry expert. Many City Councils get confused with what their roles should be; however, you all get it right. You are trying to protect the cab riding public. That should be your main interest. That is what you are doing. I applaud that being the driving force.

Mr. Frank Azzalina, 6304 Sewells Point Road, Norfolk, Virginia made the following statement: I am speaking tonight on behalf of Yellow Cab of Newport News. We have gone through a large expense of getting all of the vehicles permitted in Hampton and upgrading the vehicles to pass the Hampton inspections as well. Not increasing (the rate) will greatly reduce the incentive for Newport News drivers to come over to service Hampton; instead, they will just stay in Newport News. Newport News vehicles greatly benefit the City of Hampton with the additional 44 vehicles that could pick up the public in Hampton. I wanted to thank you again for considering the price increase.

Mayor Ward noted that normal practice is to only hear extra speakers if time permits; however, Mr. Ray arrived to the meeting on time and informed the Clerk that he would like to speak; and therefore, she allowed him to speak.

Mr. Desmond Ray, no address given, greeted Mayor Ward and the members of Council and made the following statement: I am a driver in Newport News and Hampton. I am with Orange Cab Company. I am here to address the reason I feel the City of Hampton should increase the rate of cab drivers. We the cab drivers uphold a major responsibility of transporting clients from point A to point B, whether they have missed the bus, had car problems, leaving an outing such as a club or are visiting from out of town. We are held responsible for these individuals' lives by them being transported in our vehicles. The increase will help with gas because that is a major responsibility of our job. It will also help us tremendously in our personal lives to take better care of our families and help us to feel better about ourselves while taking care of them. As far as the elderly is concerned, our company offers senior citizen discounts. The majority of trips for grocery store runs and errands are only one to three mile round trips which would only be an additional 30-65 cent which should not be a problem because a candy bar, soda, pack of cigarettes or a lottery ticket costs one dollar which is a lot more than 30-65 cent. This small percentage amount should not be an issue of affordability for a one to three mile round trip cab ride for the elderly. Thank you for your time. Good evening, Council.

Mayor Ward announced that after a short recess, the regular business meeting will convene at 7:10 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 P.M.

Molly Joseph Ward
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, CMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____



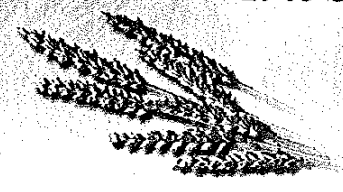
Insight

by Edwin M. Boone

*I stand in a glaring Light.
It stares at the Truth.
There are no shadows or
Obstacles that blind Me.
I am called Insight.*

*I see what others are blind to.
I do not elude the pathway
That leads Me. I travel on a
Path that others dare to follow.
I am not obscured by the shadows.
I seek a friend called Truth.*

*The Light shines so bright when Truth
Is in sight. It is only He that knows
The answer.
Truth waits in the darkness.
It is only He that sees the Light.*



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